The following is a complete listing of the claims in this application, reflects all changes currently being made to the claims, and replaces all earlier versions and all earlier listings of the claims:

1. (Currently Amended) An information processing apparatus comprising:

a) input means for inputting variable length packet data including packet length information indicative of a packet length and encoded information data, and identification flag information for identifying the packet length information, wherein the identification flag information is not included in the variable length packet data;

b) generation means for generating identification flag information for discriminating said packet length information, wherein the identification flag information is not included in the variable length packet data;

b) c) judgment means for distinguishing the packet length information included in the packet data in accordance with the identification flag information, and judging the packet length of the packet data; and

c) d) packet generating means for generating the variable length packet data into fixed length packet data in accordance with an output of said judgment means, and transmitting the fixed length packet data.

2. (Previously Amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

clock reference information generating means for generating clock reference information for use in a time reference during decoding of the encoded information data,

wherein said packet generating means transmits at least one fixed length packet data provided with the clock reference information generated by said clock reference information generating means within a predetermined time interval.

3. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising:

program specific information generating means for generating program specific information indicative of a program specific of a packet to be transmitted,

wherein said packet generating means transmits at least one fixed length packet data provided with the program specific information generated by said program specific information generating means within the predetermined time interval.

4. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said input means inputs a plurality of types of variable length packet data.

5. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said packet generating means transmits the fixed length packet data provided with the clock reference information, when no effective fixed length packet data is present.

6. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said packet generating means transmits the fixed length packet data provided with the program specific information, when no effective fixed length packet data is present.

7. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the variable length packet data is Packetized Elementary Stream (PES) conforming to ISO/IEC 13818-1, and the fixed length packet data is Transport Stream (TS) conforming to ISO/IEC 13818-1.

8. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the clock reference information is Program Clock Reference (PCR) conforming to ISO/IEC 13818-1.

9. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the program specific information is Program Specific Information (PSI) conforming to ISO/IEC 13818-1.

10. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the information data is image data, and is encoded in conformity with ISO/IEC 13818-2.

11. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said packet generating means inserts a stuffing byte when the code length of the variable length

packet data is less than the code length which can be inserted to the fixed length packet data.

12. (Currently Amended) An information processing apparatus comprising:

a) encoding means for encoding information data, generating variable length packet data including packet length information indicative of a packet length and, wherein said encoding means includes generation means for generating identification flag information for ~~identifying~~ discriminating the packet length information, wherein the identification flag information is not included in the variable length packet data; and

b) converting means for distinguishing the packet length information included in the packet data in accordance with the identification flag information ~~generated by said encoding means~~, judging the packet length of the variable length packet data, and converting the variable length packet data to fixed length packet data,

wherein said encoding means is connected to said converting means via at least a data bus for transmitting the variable length packet data and a flag bus for transmitting the identification flag information.

13. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 12, wherein said encoding means comprises clock reference information generating means for

generating clock reference information for use in a time reference during decoding of the

encoded information data, and said encoding means is connected to said converting means

via a clock reference bus for transmitting the clock reference information.

14. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 12, wherein

said converting means is connected to a plurality of said encoding means via the data bus

and the flag bus which are common.

15. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the

variable length packet data is Packetized Elementary Stream (PES) conforming to ISO/IEC

13818-1, and the fixed length packet data is Transport Stream (TS) conforming to ISO/IEC

13818-1.

16. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 13, wherein the

clock reference information is Program Clock Reference (PCR) conforming to ISO/IEC

13818-1.

17. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the

information data is image data, and is encoded in conformity with ISO/IEC 13818-2.

18. (Currently Amended) An information processing apparatus

comprising:

a)   first generating means for generating variable length packet data including encoded information data;

b)   second generating means for generating and transmitting first fixed length packet data from the variable length packet data generated by said first generating means; and

c)   generating means for generating clock reference information for use in a time reference during decoding of the encoded information data,

wherein said second generating means generates second fixed length packet data including the clock reference information and transmits the second fixed length packet data within a predetermined time interval, and transmits the second fixed length packet data when there is no effective first fixed length packet data within the predetermined time interval.

19. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 18, wherein the variable length packet data is Packetized Elementary Stream (PES) conforming to ISO/IEC 13818-1, and the fixed length packet data is Transport Stream (TS) conforming to ISO/IEC 13818-1.

20. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 18, wherein the clock reference information is Program Clock Reference (PCR) conforming to ISO/IEC 13818-1.

21. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 18, wherein the information data is image data, and is encoded in conformity with ISO/IEC 13818-2.

22. (Currently Amended) An information processing apparatus comprising:

   a)   first generating means for generating variable length packet data including encoded information data;

   b)   second generating means for generating and transmitting first fixed length packet data from the variable length packet data generated by said first generating means; and

   c)   generating means for generating program specific information indicative of a program specific of the first fixed length packet data,

   wherein said second generating means generates second fixed length packet data including the program specific information and transmits the second fixed length packet data within a predetermined time interval, and transmits the second fixed length packet data when there is no effective first fixed length packet data within the predetermined time interval.

23. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 22, wherein the variable length packet data is Packetized Elementary Stream (PES) conforming to ISO/IEC 13818-1, and the fixed length packet data is Transport Stream (TS) conforming to ISO/IEC 13818-1.

24. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 22, wherein the program specific information is Program Specific Information (PSI) conforming to ISO/IEC 13818-1.

25. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 22, wherein the information data is image data, and is encoded in conformity with ISO/IEC 13818-2.

26. (Currently Amended) An information processing method comprising the steps of:

inputting variable length packet data including packet length information indicative of a packet length and encoded information data, and identification flag information for identifying the packet length information, wherein the identification flag information is not included in the variable length packet data;

generating identification flag information for discriminating the first packet length information, wherein the identification flag information is not included in the variable length packet data;

distinguishing the packet length information included in the packet data in accordance with the identification flag information, and judging the packet length of the packet data; and

generating the variable length packet data into fixed length packet data in accordance with the judgment result and transmitting the fixed length packet data.

27. (Currently Amended) An information processing method comprising the steps of:

generating variable length packet data including encoded information data;

generating and transmitting first fixed length packet data from the generated variable length packet data; and

generating clock reference information for use in a time reference during decoding of the encoded information data,

wherein said fixed length packet generating step includes a step of generating second fixed length packet data including the clock reference information and transmitting the second fixed length packet data within a predetermined time interval, and a step of transmitting the second fixed length packet data when there is no effective first fixed length packet data within the predetermined time interval.

28. (Currently Amended) An information processing method comprising the steps of:

generating variable length packet data including encoded information data;

generating and transmitting first fixed length packet data from the generated variable length packet data; and

generating program specific information indicative of a program specific of said the first fixed length packet data,

wherein said fixed length packet data generating step includes a step of generating second fixed length packet data including the program specific information, and a step of transmitting the second fixed length packet data within a predetermined time interval, and a step of transmitting the second fixed length packet data when there is no effective first fixed length packet data within the predetermined time interval.

29. (Original) A storage medium in which an information processing program according to claim 26 is stored and which can be read by a computer.

30. (Original) A storage medium in which an information processing program according to claim 27 is stored and which can be read by a computer.

31. (Original) A storage medium in which an information processing program according to claim 28 is stored and which can be read by a computer.